



**Back 2 Work Workforce Development  
Programmatic Outcomes and Implications**

## Purpose

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This report summarizes participation patterns, workforce outcomes, and reentry impacts of the Back to Work (B2W) program, from inception to current year. The report emphasizes best-practice outcome measurement grounded in service time and data integrity.

## Data Integrity and Scope

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### Reporting Period: January 2021 – February 2026

- **Total Records: 15,539**
- **Duplicate Entries Identified: 674**
- **Non-Participants (≤31 Days): 1,413**
- **Total Records Analyzed: 13,452**

**Interpretation:** Non-participant exits, defined as no engagement or fewer than 31 days enrolled, reflect participation in less than one-quarter of the program and provide insufficient exposure to assess workforce or recidivism outcomes. Following workforce development research standards, analyses focus on participants with 32 or more days of engagement to accurately capture program outcomes and impact.

## Snap Shot: Records Analyzed

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**Enrolled: 13,452**

- **Total Exits: 11,331 (84.27%)**
  - **Early Exits/Dropouts: 6,264 (46.55%)**
  - **Participants Served: 5,067 (37.67%)**
- **Active Participants: 2,121 (15.78%)**

## Early Exits

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**Early Exits/ Dropouts: (n= 6,264)**

- **Unknown / Resignation / Quit / No Show / Abandonment: 3,873 (61.85%)**
- **Violation / Dismissal / Termination: 981 (15.65%)**
- **Health / Medical / Family / Deceased: 778 (12.41%)**
- **Recidivism: 282 (4.50%)**
- **Transportation / Other: 158 (2.52%)**
- **Relocation: 149 (2.38%)**
- **Substance Related: 43 (0.69%)**

## Recidivism Identified Among Early Exits

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Of **13,452** enrollees, **282** reoffended during the program, reflecting a recidivism rate of **2.1%**.

**Context:** Recidivism was measured using program-reported justice involvement during the reporting period. These results highlight B2W's role as a specialized reentry workforce intervention, rather than a general employment program. While national recidivism benchmarks for justice-involved populations often range between **20%** and **60%** *over multi-year follow-up periods*, B2W's recidivism rate of approximately **2.1%** during the reporting period suggests strong short-term stabilization outcomes. Continued longitudinal tracking will further validate long-term impact.

## Program Completion: Re-Entry Outcomes

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**Completed Program: 5,067 participants (37.66%)**

- **Exited Employed (including 96 Caltrans hires): 3,381 (66.74%)**
  - **Caltrans Hires: 96 (0.03%)**
- **Exited as Students: 190 (3.75%)**
- **Program or Employment Retention: 83 (1.64%)**
- **Program Completion (Exited Unemployed/Unknown Status): 1,156 (22.82%)**
- **Program Downsizing (Exited Unemployed/Unknown Status): 257 (5.07%)**

**Context:** Of the participants *who completed and exited the program*, **3,654** successfully transitioned to employment, education, or retention, resulting in a reentry (placement) rate of approximately **72.1%**.

## Justice-Impacted: Re-Entry Outcomes

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Of the **13,452 total records analyzed**, **9,874** participants had justice-involved backgrounds, approximately **73.4%** of the *total population*. Of the **5,067 participants** that *completed the program*, **3,796** of the completers were justice-involved. Among them, **2,812** successfully reintegrated through education, employment, or retention, representing a reintegration rate of approximately **74.1%** *among justice-involved program completers*.

## Employment Outcomes: Industries and Reported Wages

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**Total Employed: 3,381**

**Context:** Average wages are based only on participants who reported wages. *Not all participants who reported an industry reported a wage, and not all who reported a wage reported an industry.* This report reflects only the subset of exited participants for whom data were available

Industry	Total	Average
Social Services & Healthcare	417	\$20.03
Warehouse & Transportation	525	\$18.93
General Labor, Construction & Manufacturing	527	\$19.73
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	17	\$22.16
Administration, Office & Government	46	\$20.97
Retail	260	\$17.86
Cleaning, Sanitation & Waste Services	159	\$19.91
Hospitality & Service Industry	233	\$18.14
Utilities, Oil, Quarrying and Gas Extraction	58	\$19.83
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	112	\$18.30
Finance & Business	113	\$20
Education, Entertainment, and Recreation	36	\$19.11
Trades: Security, Welding, Roofing, Carpentry, Plumbing, Auto, HVAC	108	\$18.14
Other	251	\$20
Unknown	519	\$18.23
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3381</b>	

## Program: Unemployment Outcomes

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**Total Exits: 11,331**

- **Unemployment Rate: 28.6%**

**Context:** Justice-involved individuals face high unemployment, ranging from 18% to 44%, with Black men and women disproportionately affected (35%–44%) compared to white individuals (18%–23%) (Couloute & Kopf, 2018). Unemployment is highest in the first two years post-release, emphasizing the need for pre and post-release employment programs. Our program data (2021–2026) show an unemployment rate of approximately **28.6%**, indicating progress and suggesting that targeted employment support can aid reintegration and reduce recidivism.

**Records Utilized: 4,848**

- **Employed: 3,381**
- **Retention (long-term placement): 83**
- **Unemployed: 1,384**
  - **Program Completion (Unemployed): 1,132**
  - **Program Downsizing Exit (Unemployed): 252**

**Excluded Records: 6,483**

- **Early Exits / Dropouts: 6,264**
- **Students: 190**
- **Unknown Exit Status: 29**

**Context:** The reported unemployment rate excludes program participants who recidivated, relapsed, passed away, or left the program due to voluntary resignation, health or medical reasons, or personal emergencies. The denominator used to calculate unemployment, the labor force, includes only individuals who are employed or actively seeking employment. Individuals who are not seeking work, are institutionalized (e.g., incarcerated or in rehabilitation), or left the program without verified employment status are not included in this calculation. Accordingly, participants who dropped out of the program due to resignation, quitting, no-shows, abandonment, or other personal barriers are excluded from the unemployment rate, as they are not considered part of the labor force. Based on current program records, the unemployment rate reflects only those participants who are actively engaged in seeking employment.

## Implications

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1. **Service Dosage Matters:** Outcomes are most meaningful for participants who receive sufficient program exposure. Outcomes are consistent with findings that participants who receive **32 or more days** of engagement are more likely to achieve employment or educational outcomes. Measuring performance based on meaningful participation provides more accurate, policy-relevant metrics.
2. **Early Exit Data Highlights Structural Barriers:** High rates of early exits, due to transportation, caregiving, health, or compliance challenges, signal systemic barriers that extend beyond program control. *Addressing these obstacles requires coordinated cross-system solutions rather than program disinvestment.*
3. **Workforce Development as a Public Safety Strategy:** B2W's observed recidivism rate of approximately **2.1%** during the reporting period suggests strong short-term stabilization outcomes. When considered alongside employment and educational placement results, **74.1%** among justice-involved program completers, these findings indicate that targeted workforce development may serve as an effective strategy for reducing recidivism risk. Investment in transitional employment opportunities supports both economic mobility and broader public safety objectives.
4. **Justice-Involved Populations Require Specialized Support:** With approximately **73%** of participants entering from justice-involved backgrounds, program design and resource allocation must continue to reflect the unique challenges and strengths of this population. Tailored services that address supervision requirements, skill-building, and placement support are critical for sustained success.

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## Conclusion

The Back to Work (B2W) program showcases what a focused, justice-informed workforce development model can achieve:

- **Outcomes:** **3,654** of participants achieved successful outcomes through employment, education, or retention of the **5,067** participants that completed the program.
- **Exceptionally low recidivism:** A **2.1%** recidivism rate during the reporting period, lower than commonly reported multi year state and national benchmarks of 20 to 60 percent, indicates strong public safety impacts.
- **Meaningful contributions to economic mobility:** Average reported wages ranged from **\$17.86 to \$22.16** per hour across diverse industries, supporting economic stability for participants.

By adhering to best-practice standards, analyzing participants with sufficient engagement and ensuring data integrity, B2W represents a high-impact, evidence-aligned workforce reentry model. Continued investment and policy support are warranted to expand its reach and reinforce its demonstrated outcomes in public safety, employment, and social reintegration. This report reflects program administrative data and does not represent a controlled impact evaluation. Outcomes should be interpreted as observed program results within the reporting period.

## Citations

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